

Famous Artists Series (Kindergarten):

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944)

“Squares with Concentric Circles”, 1913

Supplies Needed for Presentation and 2 Art Projects:

ART BIN:

- Samples of student art projects
- Water-soluble “Portfolio” brand oil pastels marked for Kandinsky project (NOT the “regular” oil pastels)
- Paint brushes

CFA CLOSET:

- Paper Towels
- Plastic Cups
- Watercolor paper, precut to 4” squares (for Concentric Circles project)
- White construction paper, pre-cut to half-sheets, approx. 5.5” x 8.5” (for individual project)
- Water pitcher

OTHER:

- Glue sticks, from classroom supplies
- Music of Schönberg’s First String Quartet, 1905, selection #4
- Online images to be pulled up in advance

 [Wassily Kandinsky pictures](#)

Ahead of Time Preparation:

- 1) Make sure you read through the entire presentation and have all of your materials gathered, pre-cut, etc.
- 2) There are 2 art projects. The first project has the students recreating the “Squares with Concentric Circles” piece shown above, using water- soluble oil pastels and a brush dipped in water to achieve a watercolor effect. You will need to cut the poster board to accommodate the number of students in the class. Each child gets a 4” square, so if there are 20 students, you will create a poster grid that is 4 squares by 5 squares, so cut the poster paper to 16” x 20”. If you have fewer students than 20, it’s okay to have a few extra squares to fill; you or the teacher might contribute to the “Concentric Circles” poster project, too. If you have more than 20 students, cut the paper to 16” x 24”.
- 3) When the students are finished with the first project, the 2nd project is more free form. They will use the 5.5” x 8.5” paper to make lines, patterns, and shapes

of their choosing with the oil pastels and then use the same brush dipped in water technique.

3) Be prepared to demonstrate the use of the materials as you discuss the art project.

Presentation: (Suggested time: 20 minutes)

Briefly engage the students:

Are you wearing a color that reflects how you are feeling today?
If you were a color, which color would you be and why?, Etc.

Today, we are going to learn about an artist who believed that a painting of colors, shapes and lines could be full of power and feeling.

Present SLIDE #2 [Squares with Concentric Circles, 1913](#)

Present SLIDE #3 [portrait of Wassily Kandinsky, 1905, age 39](#)

This fantastical, colorful picture was painted by Wassily Kandinsky (Va-SEE-lee Can-din-skee). Kandinsky wanted to see what different colors looked like when painted next to each other. He thought, what does red look like next to green? Does yellow look brighter when painted next to purple? Which colors seem to be quiet and which colors are loud? When experimenting with color, he said, “I applied streaks and blobs of colors onto the canvas and I made them *sing* with all the intensity I could...” *What do you think Kandinsky meant by making colors SING?*

Color was very important to Kandinsky and music was very important to him, too. He believed that colors could be “heard” and express feelings in the same way as music. He once said, “Color is the keyboard...the artist is the hand that plays.” Kandinsky claimed that when he looked at colors, he could hear music!

Kandinsky was born into a musical family in Moscow, Russia in 1866.

Present SLIDE #4 [map, showing Russia in relation to North America](#)

Kandinsky’s parents both played piano and Wassily learned to play the piano and cello at a young age. When he grew up, he decided to become a lawyer (a person who studies laws and gives advice to people), and it wasn’t until Kandinsky was over 30 years old that he took up painting. (It shows you that it’s never too late to start learning something that you’ve never tried before!)

He traveled to places like Paris, where he saw art from many famous painters experimenting with different techniques of painting. This inspired Kandinsky to try

new things, too. First, he painted in an “Impressionistic” style that was brand new during this time:

Present SLIDE #5 example of Impressionist painting by Monet (Water Lillies) to demonstrate what kind of paintings Kandinsky saw in Paris:
An Impressionistic artist painted outdoors with quick, short brushstrokes because he or she wanted to capture a scene with the available sunlight before it got dark.

Present SLIDE #6 The Blue Rider, 1903

So first, Kandinsky painted The Blue Rider, 1903, in an Impressionistic style and later, Kandinsky started to form his own ideas about painting:

Present SLIDE #7 Rider over the Bridge, 1910

What objects do you see in both paintings? (rider, horse, trees, rocks...) How are these paintings different?

(“The Blue Rider” shows more texture from brushstrokes, realistic colors from nature, etc. while “Landscape with Rider on a Bridge” shows the objects as simple, flat, outlined shapes in bright colors. Kandinsky is gradually developing a new style of painting!)

Kandinsky was one of the first artists, if not *the* first, to develop “abstract” art – art that doesn’t try to show recognizable objects, people or scenes. Abstract art is made up of expressive lines, shapes and colors.

Kandinsky said that he began to experiment with abstract art after seeing a picture that had fallen on its side. Seen on its side, he didn’t recognize it and began to look at the picture as shapes and colors. He found the picture much more interesting! (Volunteer: show the Monet or other Impressionist painting on its side to demonstrate this point.)

Present SLIDE #8 Klamm Improvisation, 1914

Look at all the lines and shapes in this painting. Can you find straight lines and wavy lines? Zigzags? Dots? Dashes? Patterns? Stripes? How does this painting make you feel? (Calm? Excited? Happy? Etc.?) If this painting were music, would it be loud or quiet? What else do you see?

Present SLIDE #9 Composition VIII, 1923 and SLIDE #10 Im Blau, 1925

Kandinsky continued to find new ways of painting lines, shapes and colors. He painted these works while he was teaching at a famous art school in Germany called The Bauhaus.

What shapes do you see in Kandinsky's Bauhaus paintings? What's different about the lines and shapes in these paintings compared to his earlier work? **(refer back to SLIDE #8 / Klamm Improvisation)** (Earlier work is softer, flowing, etc.; work from The Bauhaus is more defined, sharp, precise, geometric...)

Finally, these are examples of how Kandinsky's paintings looked towards the end of his career: **(Pull up SLIDE #11- Sky Blue, 1940 and SLIDE #12 Tempered Élan, 1944)** His work changed again to shapes that were said to be more like "pictograms", instead of just geometric shapes.

After learning all about Kandinsky, do you believe that you can make your paintings SING using color, lines and shapes? Let's find out!! Today, we will complete two projects while listening to music by Kandinsky's friend, Arnold Schönberg. (Volunteer: Have the students get up and stretch before starting the project)

Suggested Art Projects

Suggested Time: 25+ minutes

Intro to both projects:

Show Kandinsky's “Squares with Concentric Circles” and student Sample of 4” painted square.

We are going to recreate Kandinsky's masterpiece, “Squares with Concentric Circles.”

Step 1: Each student will draw circles (like a target) on a square piece of paper, using oil pastels, as shown. (Volunteers will demonstrate use of pastels.) Use bright colors to make the colors sing!

Step 2: Use a fat paint brush or foam brush to lightly “paint” water over your pastel drawing to create a blurry, watercolor effect. (Volunteers will demonstrate use of a paintbrush dipped in water and “paint” over the surface of their pastel circle/target). NOT TOO MUCH WATER, OR COLORS WILL LOOK MUDDY!

Step 3: We will collect the squares from each of you, glue them on a poster board and display our own “Squares with Concentric Circles” painting as a group class project.

When you are completed with this project, you will use the same pastels to create your own abstract painting, using lines, shapes and colors.

Show student samples of abstract paintings.

For this project:

- 1) On the white paper, draw lines that show movement with oil pastels. What would lines look like if they were dancing, skipping, jumping, spinning, etc.? Make patterns. Fill your picture with designs made of dashes, dots, swirls, stripes, fun shapes, etc.
- 2) Paint. When your oil pastel drawing is completed, lightly dip your paintbrush in water and “paint” over the lines to create a watercolor effect. AGAIN, NOT TOO MUCH WATER OR THE PAINTING WILL LOOK MUDDY.

Volunteer: Play the music while kids are creating their art.

- Students should clean the brushes with water and blot with paper towels.